

# A Floating Axehead and Chariots of Fire

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're going to read together more of that now as we turn to our Bibles. And as you know, Phil Copeland has been preaching in some of these early chapters of the second! book of Kings, which you'll find in your Bibles after the first book of Kings. And if you don't have a Bible with you, don't have your Bible, there are visitors' Bibles at the sides and at the back, and the stewards will be glad to come and give you one if you need one. It's page 312 in those red Bibles. And we're going to read together the story beginning in 2 Kings chapter 6 at verse 1 and through to verse 23. 2 Kings chapter 6 and at verse 1.

Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, See, the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us. Let's go to the Jordan, and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there. And he answered, Go. And one of them said, Be pleased to go with your servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water. And he cried out, Alas, my master, it was borrowed.

Then the man of God said, Where did it fall? When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it there and made the iron float. And he said, Take it up. So he reached out his hand and took it.

Once, when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, That such and such a place shall be my camp. But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there. The king of Israel sent to the place of which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice. And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing. And he called his servants and said to them, Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king. But Elisha, the prophet, who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom. And he said, Go and see where he is that I may send and seize him. It was told to him, Behold, he is in Dothan. So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

[ 2 : 48 ] When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, Alas, my master, what shall we do?

He said, Don't be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And then Elisha prayed. And he said, O Lord, please open the eyes that he may see.

So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. And when the Syrians came down against them, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, Please strike this people with blindness.

So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I'll bring you to the man who you seek. And he led them to Samaria. And as soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, O Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw.

[ 4 : 03 ] And behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. As soon as the king of Israel, whose palace was in Samaria, as soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, My father, shall I strike them down?

Shall I strike them down? He answered, You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

So he prepared for them a great feast. When they'd eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.

Amen. May God bless to us his word and help us to understand and receive its message to us tonight. God, please have your Bibles open to 2 Kings chapter 6.

That would be really helpful. How does the Lord protect his people?

[ 5 : 27 ] What means does he use to shield his church, his true Israel today, as we live in these times of difficulty and darkness?

And the Lord's protection, is it something that he reserves only when the church is in a big crisis? Well, 2 Kings 6 has answers to this question.

Friends, this is yet another thrilling chapter of Kings, where the main focus is upon the truly awesome ministry of Elisha, where the Lord, the Word, does great things through this prophet for Israel.

Which, given the context, might surprise us. Those of you who've been here with us these past few Sundays might be surprised at this. Because in chapter 5, we saw, last Sunday, the way in which the Lord bypassed Israel, and he reached out in his grace, beyond Israel's borders, to a pagan Gentile, Commander Naaman of the Syrian army.

And this bypassing of Israel and reaching out was down to the fact that the majority of Israel had rejected the Lord their God, spurned his grace, and turned to worship idols instead.

[ 6 : 47 ] And having seen that in chapter 5, as we come to chapter 6, you may be expecting to hear about the Lord pouring out his full and just judgment upon Israel, but no, no.

In chapter 6, the Lord does not punish, he protects. Yet again, in this book, we see the Lord's colossal patience.

Not wishing for any to perish, but giving them time to turn to him. And he displays his grace once again. With that in mind, let's run through this chapter in four scenes, four sections.

Here's the first scene, one to seven. The Lord cares about his people's personal problems. The Lord cares about his people's personal problems.

So in verse 1, Elisha is approached by some sons of the prophets. We've bumped into them a few times in the book already. They were members of the remnant of faith, the small group of real believers within the land of Israel, those who had chose to avoid going along with the rest of the nation in their idol worship.

[ 8 : 00 ] They'd shunned idol worship and stayed faithful to the Lord. And it seems that this particular group of the sons of the prophets, they were dotted about all over the place.

But it seems that this group were part of Elisha's ministry training scheme. They lived together. They ate together. We know that from chapter 4. And they also regularly sat under Elisha's teaching.

And in verse 1, things seem to be going well because their number has gone and grown beyond their accommodation. All right? The numbers attending Elisha's training course has risen.

And so they need a new place to meet. And in verse 2, one of these sons of the prophets makes a suggestion to Elisha. He says, look, why don't we move? There's a great spot up the road around the River Jordan.

We can go there, roll up our sleeves, and build a new place. And Elisha says, go. He gives it the green light. But then another one pipes up and says, oh, excuse me, master, Elisha, please come with us.

[ 9 : 07 ] Please come with us. And what a crucial moment that turns out to be for at least one of these men. And Elisha says, okay, yeah, I'll go with you. So verse 4, they leave their old dwellings, make their way up the Jordan, and they get straight to work, chopping down trees for wood.

But in verse 5, as one of them is in the middle of felling, an accident happens. And the iron head of his axe comes flying off the handle, and it drops right into the river.

I should have brought a bit of iron with me here and plopped it in there as a little active prop to keep you awake and with me. But anyway, you get the picture. We don't know what happened. Maybe it was an aggressive backswing, or maybe the axe just wasn't secured onto the handle, but it comes flying off.

And it's now lying, irretrievably so, at the bottom of the river. And the axe wielder immediately, in his crisis, turns to the man of God, and he cries out, Oh no!

My master! It was borrowed. He's understandably upset. Back then, you couldn't just pop in the car and nip up to the local B&Q; to buy a replacement. Such tools were costly to produce.

[10:23] Well, in verse 6, having heard this man's cry, Elisha looks at him with rage and says, Oh, pull yourself together, man. Don't be so stupid. It's just a stupid little lost bit of tool.

Pull yourself together. Who do you think you are anyway, bringing such a piddly little problem before the word of the Lord? He doesn't say that, does he? Wrong. Elisha is completely calm. And he immediately, without hesitation, responds to the man's need. He asks, Where did it go in the river? And they show him. He walks over.

He cuts off a stick. We don't know how big or how small, but he cuts off a stick. He launches it into that point in the river. And all of a sudden, the axe head made of iron, made of iron.

It was on the riverbed, but now there it is, defying the laws of physics, floating on the surface of the water as though it was a rubber duck. Elisha says to the man, Grab it.

[11:25] And he does. What on earth have we got to learn from this? What have we got to learn from this? Let me just tell you, you would not believe some of the stuff that's been written about this passage.

Some, who clearly seem to not believe in the Lord at all, try to rationalize it. And they say, Iron cannot float. So really what happened, was Elisha found a stick big enough to shove into the base of the axe head, where the handle normally goes, and then he yanked it out of the water, easily. Others try to moralize this episode. One writer, I read just, I couldn't help but have a wee giggle at this. One writer claims that we're being taught the valuable lesson of not carrying out building work too close to a river.

Okay. Will that be a warning to you? Another writer suggests it's all about the way that Christians should never borrow stuff. Okay. Anyway, I'll keep that in mind.

Others go down the route of allegory. And now, listen, some of them with very good intentions, okay, some of them go down the route of allegory, and they attach all sorts of spiritual meanings to every single detail in this.

[12:42] So the axe head becomes the man's soul, the soul of the man. The Jordan stands for judgment. The man's soul is hopelessly lost beneath the waters of darkness and judgment.

The stick thrown into the water is made of wood. And so was the cross. And when the cross of Jesus enters the situation, the man's soul is rescued and raised up.

My friends, all of these ways of reading this episode, I take it, are wrong turnings. Even the allegorizing, which says a lot of truth, and actually shows, people who think, like, read the Bible this way, it shows a heart for the gospel, so we shouldn't laugh.

But if we read historical narrative like that, often we can get into a real mess. Just look back at church history and you'll see that. Now we're to take this at face value, friends.

And I take it the author of Kings is actually telling us a simple but glorious truth about the Lord our God that all of His people in every age need to hear and cling on to.

[13:43] And that is the fact that our God cares deeply about our personal problems. About our everyday endeavors. About our trivial tasks. You see, here in verses 1-7 we have the word of the Lord working to address a simple and individual need.

Now if you zoomed out and looked at what surrounds the passage, you will find episodes of much greater significance. Chapter 4 is full of people who are facing life-threatening situations and the Lord protects them.

Chapter 5, the healing of the Syrian army commander would have had big international implications. Read into chapter 6 and 8 you'll find scenes taken up with international politics, foreign affairs, military strategy, and national crises.

And in the middle of all that you have this man with his lost bit of a borrowed tool. And the Lord, the maker of the cosmos, the sustainer of everything helps this man.

If you're a Christian here today, this is what your God is like. There's God's people today when we look around at the world and see all of the major dilemmas.

[14:57] When you turn on your news channel for even just five minutes, you'll be bombarded with chaos and calamity. You look at it, you feel overwhelmed and you think, can God possibly have interest in the puny problems of my everyday life?

Isn't God's agenda full? One preacher on this point says this, the greatness of God in large measure consists in the fact that He is faithful in little.

We make a big mistake when we confuse God's greatness with bigness or when we associate His greatness with only bigness. We end up with a distant CEO type of God who never has any time for us.

But that's not our God, friends. That's not your God if you belong to Jesus. He does attend to the small problems, the dinky details, the individual needs, the mundane, the ordinary affairs of the believer's life.

The hairs of your head are numbered and He knows them. God really does care about the axe head moments of your life. This week I read a story, it's not my story, it's from a commentary, but I'm going to repeat it.

[16:18] If you can't beat it, repeat it, as Terry McCutcheon always tells me. But anyway, I read this story about William Gladstone, former Prime Minister of Great Britain. And when Gladstone was Prime Minister, there was a local man who worked as a street sweeper in and around the area of Downing Street.

He would pick off litter off the pavement. And this street sweeper, he'd been in that same position for many years. He'd done the same job for many years. Many local people knew him. One day, he didn't come to work.

It was unheard of. He failed to turn up because he'd taken ill. And a Christian worker from the man's church, the street sweeper's church, went to visit him.

And he lived in this tiny little attic room and it was practically unfurnished. There was a bed, a wooden chair, and a table. And the Christian worker sat there looking at all of this and said to the street sweeper, you must be terribly lonely.

Have you had any visitors? And the street sweeper replied, oh yes, I have. Mr. Gladstone popped in to see me. He sat down on that chair and read the Bible to me this morning.

[17:32] The Christian worker said, Mr. Gladstone? You mean the Mr. Gladstone? The Prime Minister? And the street sweeper said, oh yes, that's him. Yes, that's him.

Mr. Gladstone, as Prime Minister of Great Britain, probably had more than a thousand things to attend to that day. But here he was, caring for this man and helped him in his need.

And friends, that is just a faint, pale analogy of the constant, unending attention our Father in Heaven has for all of his precious people in Christ today.

Now, if you're anything like me, I just wonder if maybe some of us have often held ourselves back from turning to our Father in Heaven to ask him for help with our personal problems because we desperately want to avoid becoming self-centered and self-obsessed.

And that's absolutely right. We do not want to be self-obsessed. We live in a self-obsessed society and we don't want to be like that. But friends, let's not go to the opposite extreme and never ask our Father for help with anything in daily life.

[18:43] because he clearly loves when his people turn to him with this sort of trivial stuff. Bob Fowle says this, the crying child because her dog has died, a teenager in the first pangs of adolescent love, an old person finding loneliness hard to bear, a busy mother who's lost her keys and might not be the stuff of profound theology.

But are we not glad that God cares for those things just as much as the rise and the fall of nations? Scene 2, verse 8 to 13.

The Lord protects his people by frustrating the foe. The Lord protects his people by frustrating the foe. So verse 8, time is different here, where it's a different time.

From the floating axe head episode. Syria is warring with Israel. And what the author tells us in this next section about the way that the Lord deals with his people's enemies, it's actually meant to make us chuckle.

It's meant to make us giggle. It has a comic touch about it, very much like what we read about Ehud in Judges this morning. Anyway, in verse 8, we're told that the head of the enemy, the king of Syria, meets with his top military advisors.

[20:15] And they get together and you can picture them all serious and full of pomp at their top secret location to carefully plan out their top secret military raids into Israel.

That is, together, what they do is they pick strategic places in Israel and they'll send soldiers to sneak to that area, set up a temporary camp, and then they will attack Israel, causing great harm and havoc.

The trouble is, somehow, just somehow, these top secret plans are not being kept top secret. For the king of Israel always finds out what is about to happen, what's about to happen. He always takes the necessary defensive action and, as a result, every single one of the recent Syrian raids into Israel has failed.

The king of Syria is driven absolutely mad by all of this. You can imagine him saying to himself, look, why does this keep happening? In verse 11, he's full of paranoia, totally paranoid, and he calls his advisors together and he looks at them and he says, right, which one of you has done it?

[ 21 : 29 ] Which one of you loves the king of Israel? Which one of you is passing on our secret plans to him? Come on, which one of you is the mole? And one of the men pipes up, verse 12, no, your majesty, it's not us, it's Elisha, the prophet in Israel.

He tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your, here's the top secret location, in your bedroom, in your bedroom. Now, we're not told how this advisor knew about Elisha, but he's absolutely right.

Verse 9 tells us that the word of the Lord somehow enabled Elisha to hear every single thing that the king of Syria had planned in secret in his bedroom.

And then Elisha would then go and tell the king of Israel and the Lord's people would be spared.

And then verse 13, it should also make us giggle a little bit because the king of Syria, poor old king of Syria, he finds out that Elisha has got this special insight into all his secret plans.

And so what does he do in response? He makes up another plan and he launches it. He says, right, go and see where this Elisha is that I may send and seize him.

[ 22 : 48 ] What does he think is going to happen this time? Well, we'll see what happens in a moment. But friends, let's not rush over the way the Lord operates here.

He often delights to demonstrate his sovereignty and his superiority over his foes, often in the most amusing ways in order to protect his people.

A friend of mine once told me something that happened decades ago in China when many Christians had to worship underground in underground houses. Underground, sorry, not underground houses, underground house churches.

Sorry, they might have been underground, I do not know. But anyway, they were hiding for fear of persecution from the state. And their meeting places were constantly being changed each time they met in order to avoid crackdowns.

And church leaders and members were frequently arrested and had horrible things done to them, sometimes sent to labor camps. Well, at one particular meeting, those present had a very strong sense of the Lord's loving presence among them as they were gathered around his word to worship him, like we're doing this evening.

[ 24 : 04 ] And at the very end of their time together, before they closed in prayer, two visitors stood up and announced that they had been sent to carry out arrests on behalf of the state.

But instead, they now wanted to repent and to surrender to the Lord Jesus. They wanted to become Christians. The protector of the church had disarmed the enemy.

Another example of the Lord working in this way from a more recent time. I know of a man who was once running a Christian youth club in his local secondary school.

He had booked out in the school this amazingly spacious classroom for every Tuesday lunchtime for the whole of term. And it had been confirmed that it had been booked up.

And as he would meet with these youth, the kids that came there, they would have a great time playing some games. And then they would get the Bible out and they had some really engaging time in God's word. But he turned up one Tuesday to find that the militant school LGBT group had cancelled his booking and they notified him that they were now meeting at that room in that place at that time of the week instead.

[ 25 : 19 ] And there was no bother to the Lord because he had his hand on whoever controlled the room booking system. Because from that week on, this man got to run his lunchtime club in the assembly hall.

And the assembly hall had massive glass entrance doors which meant that when pupils passed by the corridor, any time they looked in on a Tuesday lunchtime, they saw a group of other pupils having a great time together and also sitting down around the Bible to enjoy the teaching, asking questions, engaging with the gospel.

And over the next few weeks, there was a slow rise in numbers at my friend's club. And more and more pupils turned up genuinely interested to hear about Christianity.

My friend was about to write a letter of thanks to the LGBT group, but he resisted and thanked the Lord instead. Now friends, of course, God does not always intervene this way.

The Bible warns us all over the place that Christ's people won't always have it so easy. There may well be times when the church receives a real pasting from Christ's enemies.

[ 26 : 33 ] Christ's people might even be put to death by Christ's enemies. But 2 Kings 6 assures us that often the Lord defends us by frustrating our foes.

And he does this even at times when we don't even realize this. About half the people in Israel had no idea that the Lord was doing this through Elisha. And this chapter also assures us that no one can touch or harm God's church unless our defender allows it.

Scene 3, verse 14 to 17. The Lord surrounds us with His heavenly hosts. His heavenly hosts. And what the Bible means by heavenly hosts is His angelic army.

That's verse 14 to 17. So the king of Syria has launched this new plan to capture Elisha whom he finds out is currently living in a place called Dothan which is a city 12 miles north of the capital.

The capital being Samaria. So in verse 14 the king sends this hulking army unit of Syrian soldiers to get Elisha armed to the teeth with many horses and chariots.

[ 27 : 56 ] And they carry out a sneak attack by night. And when they arrive the army is so big we're told that it engulfs the city. It just surrounds the place. And there they wait until morning.

And verse 15 when Elisha's servant wakes up and he looks outside he sees this sea of Syrian soldiers with all their horses and all their chariots.

And he cries to Elisha Alas my master what shall we do? And in verse 16 Elisha screams in desperation Oh I don't know! Wrong.

Wrong again. No. Friends Elisha is as cool and as calm as he was back in verse 6 where he faced that lost tool bit. He is not disturbed at all.

He simply says to his servant do not be afraid. Why? For those who are with us are more than those who are with them. You see Elisha is aware of the presence of another unseen army in the region.

[ 29 : 05 ] And in order to help his faithful servant Elisha prays. Verse 17 O Lord please open his eyes that he may see. So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

The Syrian artillery looked impressive and intimidating but it was nothing compared to the Lord's army. His heavenly hosts with their flaming horses and flaming chariots.

Now we had a glimpse of them back in chapter 2 of 2 Kings when they came and took away the prophet Elijah. It always annoys the life out of me when the England national rugby team sing chariot that chariot swing low sweet chariot that annoys the life out of me that they sing that but anyway that's because I don't like English rugby.

But anyway but that's what we've seen them before back in chapter 2 and here they are again revealed in all their splendor. They are far more terrifying far more powerful far more numerous than any foe.

What a glorious comfort that would have been for that young servant to look upon the Lord's angelic army and know these are for us. this army friends is always active even if the Lord's servants cannot see them.

[ 30 : 38 ] The experience of Jesus confirms this to be so. Do you remember in the Gospels in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus rebuked Peter after he'd been attacking those who came to arrest Jesus?

Jesus said to Peter do you think I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Just imagine that. There were twelve legions that works out at about seventy-two thousand mighty spirits chomping at the bit to intervene in Jesus' defense.

But the legions were idle because the cross was the will of God. But in Gethsemane it was as if Jesus turns to Peter and quietly says I don't lack resources which means that Jesus knew and lived under the unseen protection of 2nd Kings 6 verse 17.

And elsewhere in the Bible friends we know that this same army is always present always doing the Lord's bidding and protecting all the Lord's people. Just listen to John Calvin on this point and this is

from his Institutes volume 1 chapter 14 if you have a copy at home you might want to read it later. [ 32 : 00 ] Calvin says this Scripture recalls that the angels keep vigil for our safety take upon themselves our defense direct our ways and take care that some harm may not befall us.

Listen to this universal universal that's for all of God's people universal are the statements that apply first of all to Christ the head of the church and then to all believers such as Psalm 91 verse 11 to 12 verses that helped me in my hospital bed recently say this the Lord has commanded his angels to guard you in all your ways they shall bear you up in their hands that you may not stumble upon a stone or Psalm 34 verse 7 the angel of the Lord abides around about all those who fear him and rescues them Calvin goes on to say to fulfill the task of protecting the church the angels fight against the devil against all our enemies and carry out God's vengeance against those who harm us my friends you and

I we may never well see these heavenly hosts in this life tell you there will be one day when all of us will see these heavenly hosts definitely if we die or if the Lord Jesus returns in glory the chariots of fire and the myriads upon myriads of angels will be very visible to us all on that day but in the present the Bible says they will remain hidden but the Lord doesn't need to show us them because his word assures us that they are with us protecting us because he has commanded them to do so and so friends the next time we're up against it either as a church or as individuals and maybe you're here tonight and that's where you are life has put you through the mincer and you're so downhearted because of the opposition that you face well please remember that what we see here the Lord has commanded to protect you in your life remember the sweet assurance friends of verse 16 look at it again

Elisha said do not be afraid for those who are with us are more than those who are with them scene 4 verse 18 to 23 the Lord protects even his enemies the Lord protects even his enemies so verse 18 the Syrian army finally make their move and they launch an attack upon the man of God and again Elisha calm as you like prays please strike these people with blindness and again the Lord answers the prayer of his prophet and he strikes the Syrians with blindness now the Hebrew word here for blindness it's only ever used one other time in the Bible it's extremely rare and that was back in Genesis 19 verse 11 when the men of Sodom tried to break into the house of Lot there as in this passage the Lord strikes the enemy with this not regular blindness but some sort of a divine visual impairment that causes confusion renders the enemy useless and that's what happens to these soldiers the Lord strikes them and they are useless and Elisha in verse 19 and forgive me I think we're supposed to giggle at this we're supposed to have sanctified humor and have a little giggle at this and I wonder if Elisha tried hard not to laugh as he did this but he goes up to these blind soldiers in verse 19 and he says oh you seek Elisha do you oh you're going the wrong way I'll show you the way to Elisha come follow me follow my voice so there he goes with this entire blinded army of soldiers plodding along following behind him following behind the very man that they were sent to capture and Elisha leads them out of Dothan and they go down the 12 miles to Samaria and they go right into the heart of the capital city of the enemy land and in verse 20 Elisha prays and this time he says Lord let these men see and boom their eyes were opened the Lord answers the prayer of the prophet again and the enemy troops suddenly see and behold we're standing in

[ 36 : 55 ] Samaria most probably in the king's palace surrounded by soldiers and in verse 21 when the king of Israel sees these enemy troops he's like a giddy wee school kid and he's so excited for bloodshed he says to Elisha my father shall I strike them down shall I strike them down don't be fooled by the way by the flattery there of the king of Israel for Elisha when he says my father the king of Israel is only saying that because things are going well for him remember what he's like what we've seen in previous Sundays reading to the next bit of chapter six and you will see that it's not long before he's calling for Elisha's head he wants Elisha killed when things don't go well but anyway in verse 22 in response to the king's question Elisha says no you didn't capture them by your sword so you will not kill them by your sword either this is the lord's doing and now the lord wants these men to get a taste of his mercy and that's what happens the word of the lord protects even these enemy troops this was unheard of because normally back in those days in any other nation captive soldiers were always butchered but here they end up sitting at a banquet verse 23

Israel laid out a great feast for them and they ate and drank and then headed back home to their master now notice that the lord's actions here in showing mercy to these pagan soldiers was also for the benefit of his own people because from that day on Syria never carried out another raid

upon Israel it didn't bring total peace between the nations they still met for battle but there were no more raids into Israel there was some relief for God's people but just think back please to these Syrian men just picture them as they left Israel with stomachs full all of their horses and chariots no doubt with them going back to their pagan homeland unscathed all of them would go back having tasted and seen the lord of Israel is good they would head back to their homeland knowing that the lord's protection is not just open to people born in Israel it's also open to unwashed gentiles too what an opportunity this was for these Syrians if only they had eyes to see it and friends who knows maybe some of them did we're not told maybe some of them did and like Naaman they went away worshipping the real and living god but for us today the message is still the same the shelter and the protection of the lord friends it's open to all people open to everyone who turns to him doesn't matter your background where you're from doesn't matter if you've been an enemy of the lord and his people for years everyone is invited now to come under the shelter and the shadow of the almighty today again friend forgive me for asking but maybe you're here this evening and you're sick and tired you're sick and tired of being afraid being afraid of life in this world with all of its uncertainty and all its pain well turn to the lord trust in him and you will find the refuge you so desperately crave let's pray gracious heavenly father we praise you for the glorious gift of your constant protection for all of us in christ today we praise and thank you for the times when you've protected us from the schemes of the evil one even for those times when we've been under attack and we've not even known it but you've guarded us by your goodness guarding us by your many means such as your unseen angelic army father please forgive us for taking these things for granted above all lord please continue to guard our hearts and keep us trusting in you alone our shield and our defender may we pray this in jesus precious name amen Thank you.